

Building School Foodservice Demand for Products Grown, Raised and Manufactured in Missouri

Final Report
Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program (FSMIP)
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Missouri Department of Agriculture (MDA)

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Executive Summary

The FSMIP grant allowed MDA to work with school foodservice managers in over eighty elementary and secondary education districts. In these school districts MDA increased sourcing and promoting of Missouri products onto school lunch and breakfast menus as well as implemented educational resources to principals and educators.

There were 382 school foodservice promotions conducted during the 2003/2004 school year and nearly 300 promotions during August, September, October, November, and December for the current 2004/2005 school year.

Each of the promotions, performed by school foodservice departments, included the placement of Missouri food products onto breakfast and/or lunch menus as well as implementation of educational outreach programs. Missouri products promoted onto menus included milk, beef, apples, corn, rice, eggs, cantaloupe, peaches, watermelon, pumpkins, cottage cheese, decorative gourds for table tops, jam and jellies, honey, and salad dressing.

Outline of Issue or Problem

Missouri's elementary and secondary schools serve over 1,000,000 meals a day, but very little of the food consumed by Missouri school children in their breakfasts or lunches is grown, raised or manufactured in Missouri. This represents an opportunity for Missouri's diverse farming operations and food processors. The ultimate goals of this proposal was to: increase the economic impact of agriculture-based businesses in Missouri by expanding sales of products grown, raised and manufactured in Missouri to Missouri foodservice purchasers; increase awareness of the wide variety of products available for use in Missouri's schools; increase school foodservice purchases of

products grown, raised and manufactured in Missouri; and develop the expertise and experience necessary to expand foodservice marketing efforts into other foodservice marketing channels, including colleges, universities, hospitals and nursing homes.

Approach to Project

Foodservice distributors throughout the State were contacted and provided with information regarding available Missouri products and contact names. Missouri producers were provided foodservice information in order to establish an open line of communication regarding the initiative of building demand for Missouri products.

For many years, Missouri foodservice distributors purchased nearly all fresh apples and watermelons from out-of-state suppliers. Therefore, a reintroduction of growers and shippers was required in order to build a distribution network to the foodservice distributors and schools. The reintroduction phase included more than 60% of the foodservice distributors.

Contribution of public and private cooperators

US Foodservice, a national foodservice distributor, agreed to carry Missouri apples supplied by Missouri apple shippers and Missouri beef from Fruitland Dressed Meats in their inventory supply. The majority of the other foodservice distributors supporting the program were mid-size and smaller distributors. Some school districts purchased Missouri food products directly from the producers within their buying region.

An AgriMissouri™ Buyer's Guide, complete with Missouri product listings, was provided to school foodservice directors, foodservice distributor buyers, and to school bid coordinators.

Educational materials supplied to students included Missouri Products Posters, Missouri agriculture trivia pages, and links to the www.agrimissouri.com website. Compact discs containing the website address and logo were provided to participating school districts. Promotional tools were provided to participating school foodservice departments.

The final phase executes long-range plans to increase institutional purchases and requires building distribution infrastructures to allow for continued growth in Building School Foodservice Demand for Products Grown, Raised and Manufactured in Missouri. A lack of distribution networks, food product availability, and standardized foodservice packaging is a challenge. However, through continued effort, support, and education, it is possible for continued growth in sourcing Missouri products to foodservice providers.

Results:

- Three hundred eighty-two school foodservice promotions conducted in over eighty school districts during 2003/2004 school year
- Three hundred school district promotions in nearly 80 school districts transpired in August, September, October, November, and December during the 2004/2005 school year.

- Missouri products promoted on menus included milk, beef, apples, corn, rice, eggs, cantaloupe, peaches, watermelon, pumpkins, cottage cheese, decorative gourds for table tops, jam and jellies, honey, and salad dressing.
- Apple costumes, Jonee and Redee, offered for use during school foodservice Apple Promotions: August-December, 2004.
- Contest winner for the Director of Agriculture For-a-Day traveled to Jefferson City to work along side the Department Director on April, 2004.
- AgriMissouri™ Excellence Award in Foodservice contest completed for school foodservice professionals; Deanna House, School Foodservice Director, Waynesville School District, winner.
- Provided promotional tools to participating schools: pencils, Missouri Product Posters, coloring pages, and bookmarks.
- Missouri agriculture facts and trivia distributed to elementary and secondary school teachers.
- Participated in the Missouri School Foodservice Association conference in July 2004.
- Disseminated CD-ROM's for school foodservice directors.
- Missouri Product Month Excellence Award winners attended special reception at the Missouri Governor's Mansion
- Missouri Product Month Excellence Award winners attended the 2004 Governor's Conference on Agriculture at the Lake of the Ozarks.
- Principals and teachers involved in the Missouri Products Month attended the 2004 Governor's Conference on Agriculture at the Lake of the Ozarks on December 12th, 2004.
- Waynesville School District held "mini food fair" for second graders. Missouri Rice Growers, Missouri Corn Growers, Missouri Egg Council, Missouri Soybean Association, Missouri Bee Keepers, Missouri Beef Council, Missouri Pork Association, and Missouri Dairy Council participated.
- Forty-three school districts participated in a Cafeteria Decorating Contest motivating school districts to promote Missouri agriculture and usage of Missouri products on school menus.

Next Steps

- Missouri Products Promotion Month: February 2005
- May is Missouri Beef Month in 2005
- AgriMissouri Excellence Award for School Foodservice Directors 2005
- OPAA Missouri Year Long promotion and contest to motivate increased school meal participation with special award program in April 2005
- Build distribution networks cultivating procurement opportunities
- Expand commodities utilized in foodservice meal programs
- Identify expansion opportunities in other foodservice channels
- Develop task force involving foodservice distributors, school foodservice directors, and industry professionals
- Identify funding sources and develop long-term strategies for continuation of foodservice marketing
- Attend the 2005 Missouri School Foodservice Association conference

Current and Future Benefits

The overall goal of the project was to increase demand of Missouri grown, raised, or manufactured agriculture products through institutional foodservice channels. As a result, suppliers of Missouri meats, vegetables, and fruits are collaborating to place products in distribution channels where there were few or none prior. Distribution appears to allow easier access into foodservice markets. Demand for Missouri grown, raised, and manufactured agriculture products have increased.

Promotional assistance, distribution of educational materials, and school contests sponsored by MDA are increasing exposure and raising awareness of Missouri products to foodservice contractors, foodservice preparation personnel, distributors, and to school students and their families. Foodservice managers have embraced the AgriMissouri and Missouri product programs to raise awareness of healthy and nutritious choices in school meal programs.

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